

Marco Fraticelli's novel provides a wonderful model for teaching haiku to children that engages them in the art of paying attention to their own life experiences and sharing them through haiku images and feelings. This is an outstanding alternative to the typical "let's write a haiku today" assignment in which students count syllables and write "a poem about nature." It takes time, sharing, and genuine responses for a student to learn what the art of writing haiku is for—to share our emotions, observations, and insights from our lives. *Dear Elsa* would be a wonderful start for young readers and writers. I recommend you buy a copy for an elementary teacher you know (or donate a copy to your local school's library). And give a copy of this book to any youngsters who are curious about the art of writing haiku.

BRIEFLY NOTED

Enough Light, by Mary Stevens (Winchester, Va.: Red Moon Press, 2023). 96 pages; 4¼" × 6½". Glossy black and white card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-958408-21-6. Price: \$20.00 from www.redmoonpress.com

The latest from award-winning poet Mary Stevens whose peaceful approach to life is evident in these insightful poems. *morning calm / the barred owl's swivel / shakes off the snow*. Her observation of nature here captures the casual and serene mood after a snowfall. Stevens also conveys quiet domestic scenes that show their strength through how immediately they transport the reader from our world to that of the poet's. *one by one / the houselights follow me / to bed*. While this collection is comprised of mostly nature-based poems there are several relationship poems that are handled with the same steady hand. *when better than nothing / becomes not enough / waxing crescent*. Ultimately, the discipline of mindfulness is on full display in Stevens' poetry, as evidenced in her title poem: *forest fireflies / only enough light / for the next step*. The poet reminds the reader to slow down and look around. Always good advice. —Peter Newton

Red Leaves: Selected Haiku of Peggy Lyles, eds. Randy & Shirley Brooks (Taylorville, Ill.: Brooks Books, 2023). 158 pages; 6"×9". Glossy four-color cover; hardback. ISBN 978-1-929820-23-8. Price: \$30.00 from www.brooksbookshaiku.com

This is the much-anticipated second edition to Lyles' lauded 2002 collection *To Hear the Rain: Selected Haiku of Peggy Lyles*. With an excellent preface by John Stevenson, *Red Leaves* is sure to thrill the many readers and admirers Lyles has deservedly earned. *Red Leaves* is, specifically, 90 poems that serve as an addendum to her 2002 selected haiku. The title comes from one of her last published poems before her death in 2010. *into the afterlife red leaves*. Lyles captures the spirit and facts of the moment. As in *spring thunder / young magicians / reappear*. The spell of boredom from being stuck inside on a rainy day is broken with the ever-inventive minds of children at play. The immediacy with which the poet accomplishes this act again and again is almost magical. Certainly, a mystery that holds the readers attention not only from page to page but year after year. Lyles never forgot that the haiku is also a poem, subject to all the rules and regulations of said literary genre. Thus, the musicality of her words. The double oo's in *a loud goose / toward the moon— / I've lived here too* adds a sense of unity to this poem. A rejoice. The collection as a whole is essential reading for the writer who admires words and how thoughtfully they can be arranged on the page by someone who committed a lifetime to the task. Highly recommended. —PN

Even Tiny Things, by Anthony Lusardi (Windsor, Conn.: Baby Buddha Press, 2022). 12 pages; 4"×2¾". Matte green card covers; saddle-stapled. No ISBN. Price: \$4.00 from lusardi133@gmail.com

A small collection of ten poems. Lusardi's subjects are wide-ranging for so few poems bound together. Nevertheless, each poem invites its own re-reading as a kind of primer that covers the basic elements of one poet's work. By way of introduction the opening verse: *snowdrops ... / even tiny things / have long shadows* —PN

Keeping Time: Haibun for the Journey, by Penny Harter (American Fork, Utah: Kelsay Books, 2023). 99 pages; 6" × 9". Glossy four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-639802-91-3. Price: \$23.00 from online booksellers.

An impressive array of haibun stories from the hand of one of the forms most accomplished practitioners. Many, if not all, the haibun in this collection recount the life of the author that makes for a touching and intimate autobiographical portrait of her life of letters. Harter is particularly adept at weaving more than one haiku throughout her prose. Many of her sentences are poetic to the point of repeating aloud, to appreciate the quality of their sound. For example the opening of "Twilight Walk" depicts a keenly observed scene that is deceptively quiet—and perhaps, hinting at a self-portrait of the poet who writes with the wisdom of one who has lived a long life. "The duck has twisted its head to bury its beak in soft back feathers. One dark eye, half open, shines in the twilight." Followed by this haiku *reading glasses on / she studies the map of / her aging hand*. The reader learns to approach each of Harter's haibun as journeys to be heard. We want to follow the stories of her father's boyhood, or cleaning out her closet of old clothes or the poignant and personal accounts of her life with her late husband, William J. Higginson, with whom she co-wrote *The Haiku Handbook* (Kodansha America, 1985) one of the most widely-read English-language haiku books. In *Keeping Time*, Harter raises the bar in the writing of haibun. Each haiku works in service to the greater good of the haibun as a whole, offering the reader a fresh new perspective from which to view or interpret the story she is telling us. For example, in her piece called "About Loss," she uses the metaphor of a composting garden to chronicle the many things that have gone by the wayside over the course of time. "So what is growing in that composting soil, watered by the futile tears you've shed over the years as treasured things and even loved ones have gone under? Your wrinkled hands are still here, still able to grasp and let go. Sift that soil, let it dribble through the spaces between your fingers, raise it to the blessing of your breath." And the haiku that follows: *after the party / a flock of helium balloons / in the backyard trees*. These backyard balloons are like colorful ghosts that

haunt the living not to scare us, but to remind us of the simple fact that life is indeed a journey worthy of celebration. As an added bonus, Harter provides one page in the back of *Keeping Time* called “Tips for Writing Haibun.” Her list of eight succinct suggestions are a must-read for anyone serious in their attempts to write this increasingly popular hybrid form. Highly recommended. —PN

Seed Kites, by David Watts (Winchester, Va.: Red Moon Press, 2023). 92 pages; 4¼" × 6½". Matte four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-958408-14-8. Price: \$20.00 from www.redmoonpress.com

A collection of haiku that hits all the usual haiku topics such as hometown visits, fireflies, silent scarecrows, gathering storms and birdsong, among others. But Watts rises above these somewhat clichéd subjects to strike an emotional chord in the reader, especially when addressing his relationship with other people. For example: *water striders / that summer the family / was still together*. The comparison between the gravity-defying water striders and family members is unique. How tenuous our hold is on human relationships. And heart-breaking, at times. And yet how enduring certain connections can be, as in *first winter together / learning / her seasons*. Watts shares an unspoken intimacy here but stops short of saying too much. That is one of the hardest challenges for any haiku poet—knowing when to end the poem. Perhaps age and experience are essential ingredients in learning the craft. Here is one more that speaks volumes: *leaving his deathbed / what we don't share / on elevators*. Watts' haiku offer glimpses that are far from small talk. Recommended. —PN

On Earth as It Is, by Frank Higgins (Kansas City, Mo.: Spartan Press, 2023). 86 pages; 5" × 7". Matte black and white card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-958182-26-0. Price: \$13.00 from online booksellers.

A noted playwright, Higgins has decided to layout his book of haiku in an unusual way. He offsets the printed page so that the reader must turn

the book sideways and then upside down throughout the different sections. While the impulse to have fun with his audience is noted, a book is not a stage. This reader found the choice distracting from the quality of the poems. Having said that, the poems, in general, appear crowded on the page. Surely, more white space with fewer than three or four poems per page would enhance the reader's experience. One poem that reaches beyond descriptions: *brick-sized window / the distance between / his cell and the moon*. And another poem: *desert ruins / the wind sets off / a car alarm*. —PN

Busted: Reflections on Police Life, by Tim Roberts (Winchester, Va.: Red Moon Press, 2023). 118 pages; 4¼" × 6½". Glossy four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-958408-11-7. Price: \$20.00 from www.redmoonpress.com

A memoir expressed in haiku by relative newcomer to the poetic form. Roberts served as a British police detective for fifteen years. His experiences during that time provided the base material for this collection of haiku. With a Preface, an Introduction and Forward, the reader is reminded that *Busted* is geared toward those interested in the therapeutic benefits of haiku rather than the literary merits. Although there are those as well. These poems chronicle the life of a law-enforcement officer. The dark underside as well as the heroic actions of human beings. It's a gripping story told with hard-earned facts. *doorway stench ... / my body doesn't want / to go in*. And another that speaks to the allure of law enforcement as well as the dedication of those who commit to the profession *a friend's distress call / no risk too great / no rush like this*. —PN

Worn Away & Swept Out, by Guy Nesom (Winchester, Va.: Red Moon Press, 2023). 104 pages; 4¼" × 6½". Matte four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-958408-12-4. Price: \$20.00 from www.redmoonpress.com

This is Nesom's third collection of haiku in as many years. A prolific poet, he is also a botanist who has had several flowering plants named after him in the aster or daisy family. His style of writing is one filled with a wry sense of humor as in *used cap / from Ebay ... / ah well, so am I*. Another of his that represents the Nesom world view: *surprised ... / by what I wrote last year / makes sense*. His most affecting poems are those that speak to his role as a person devoted to the study of flowers. *a field of yellow faces / turned toward the sun ... / the orchestra's conductor*. And one more: *my time today / on a study of thistles ... / tomorrow too*. Nesom's is a voice with first-hand knowledge of his place in the natural world. A fun read. —PN

Electric Cat City, by Anna Cates (Winchester, Va.: Red Moon Press, 2023). 98 pages; 4¼" × 6½". Glossy four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-958408-19-3. Price: \$20.00 from www.redmoonpress.com

Subtitled "A Poesy," *Electric Cat City* offers an assortment of poetical works. Cates begins with a haiku sequence before moving into a lengthy section of haibun that comprises most of the book. In a variety of subjects, Cates creates haibun that are often lineated prose poems that read like well-crafted stanzas as well as paragraphs. Her full range of poetic talents are on display. For example, "The Snare" is a haunting nursery rhyme beginning with a deceptively sing-song chant: *a dimpled chin / a little sin ... / he arrived on time / in hand a dime / entered the gat / not too late!* that culminates in the haiku casting the final spell *rabbit trap / amid the mandrake / stooped enchantress*. The last twenty pages or so are made up of stand-alone tanka and haiku, some four to a page, which makes for some crowded reading. Also, we are not convinced that the inclusion of the original publication credit alongside each haiku is the most reader-friendly choice. There is something to be said for "white space" on the page when deciding how to present smaller poems in book form. Aside from a somewhat haphazard layout, the poems and haibun are not your garden variety subject matter. Cates likes to explore science fiction, fantasy, folklore and fairy tales. Endlessly inventive, *Electric Cat City* is a poetic adventure unlike any other. One favorite: *midnight/ among the roses ... / touch of his claw*. —PN

Longevity: Poems in the Key of Helen, by Richard Grahn (Winchester, Va.: Red Moon Press, 2023). 80 pages; 6" × 9". Matte four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-958408-04-9. Price: \$20.00 from www.redmoonpress.com

A book of haibun and tanka prose that delivers a portrait of the artist as he develops from boyhood into a mature writer. In *Longevity; Poems in the Key of Helen* Grahn succeeds in conveying the depth of influence one person can have on another. Helen, the poet's grandmother, was a spiritual and creative mentor who had a profound influence on the poet. She serves as the inspiration that sustains much of the strong writing in this collection. Just a sampling of confident sentences, for example: *The sidewalk is alive with shoes today* ("Full Circle). *Here I'm just another cardboard silhouette casually propped up in a department store window* ("The Other Side of Midnight"). And one more describing doors: *A wooden thunk, a spring, a click, a gentle yawn, a clunk* ("Center of the Universe"). This is a book by a confident writer. His trials in life have done nothing to deter him from pursuing the goal of getting down on paper. As the poet writes in "Inside the Gold Mine" *These days I find myself spending more time in the basement. It's quality time for me, springtime in my mind.* And the capping haiku *old songs / playing on the radio .../ a pear blossom opens.* —PN

Haibun Chowder, by Bryan D. Cook (No place [Canada]: privately published, 2022). 111 pages; 6" × 9". Glossy four-color card covers; ISBN 979-8-847741-83-5. Price: \$15.00 from online booksellers.

Eighty-five haibun that are essentially the poet's life story. Haibun as autobiography. Cook writes warm, friendly, often humorous life stories rich with detail that deepens our understanding of the author but do little to stretch the haibun form in any new or groundbreaking ways. Unvarying in their structure, most of the haibun are blocks of prose followed by a single capping haiku. There are a few tanka prose pieces. *Haibun Chowder* offers the reader hearty servings of one man's adventures in the

world. A church strawberry social, a canoe fishing trip, another antique-buying junket. The haiku more often than not repeat what's in the prose. Nonetheless, Cook knows how to tell a tale. We could all benefit from his lifetime of learning. —PN

Butterflies Under Glass, by Carolyn Hall (Durham, N.C.: Backbone Press, 2023). 36 pages; 5" × 7". Glossy four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-7363467-9-2. Price: \$10.00 from www.backbonepress.org

Carolyn Hall is a modern master of the haiku form. If you wish to expand your knowledge and understanding of haiku in 2023 we suggest this slim but powerful book. One would do well to invest their time in multiple readings of Hall's most recent award-winning collection of fifty-four poems. *Butterflies Under Glass* is broken into three sections of eighteen poems each of which reads like its own themed chapbook. By finding just the right words to complete these images, Hall shifts the way the reader sees the world. What better goal for any poet or reward for any reader. Make of it what you will. Is it a cloud or a shadow in the sea that triggered this poem: *cruise ship/ to starboard / something whale-shaped*. There is unexpected realizations in even the most mundane encounters when one is in tune with her surroundings. *carpet stains — / a map / of our world*. Haiku point in the direction of the poet's experience. And Hall offers her readers suggestions for future discovery. As in *vacation's end / yellow birds in the ficus / still nameless*. Some things are unknowable. And beautifully so. Lastly, by way of constructive criticism, a suggestion with regard to the production value of this collection. There is something to be gained from giving these poems more breathing room. At three to a page the reading experience seems somewhat rushed, if that makes sense. Perhaps this is an editorial choice or simply a matter of lowering production costs. But the caliber of the poems in this collection as well as the other Backbone Press titles deserve more space. One editor's opinion, of course. Regardless of how they are presented, the poems speak for themselves. Highly recommended. —PN

Island, by Kristen Lindquist (Winchester, Va.: Red Moon Press, 2023). 98 pages; 4¼" × 6½". Matte four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-958408-28-5. Price: \$20.00 from www.redmoonpress.com

This collection celebrates the life on islands off the coast of Maine. Through careful observation and deep contemplation, Kristen Lindquist gives us the presence of the ocean and land. Organized into three sections (sunlight & fog, flotsam, and lighthouse), each introduced with an evocative haibun. The book's title comes from the haibun that opens the lighthouse section. Here are a few favorite haiku from each section. From section 1: *sunlight and fog / mingle with spruces / a kinglet's thin song*, and *some stories / take all day to tell / red-eyed vireo*. From section 2: *climbing the cliff trail / the exhaust / of a lobster boat*, and *wild strawberries / picking my way / along the shore trail*. From section 3: *lifting fog / the loud clear song / of the fox sparrow*, and *autumn twilight / the lighthouse beacon turns on / the dark*. I highly recommend this collection of haiku that gift us awareness of the sustenance of Maine island life. —Randy Brooks

What Weathers, What Returns: An Anthology of the Broadmoor Haiku Collective, ed. Kristen Lindquist (Winchester, Va.: Red Moon Press, 2023). 115 pages; 5" × 7". Matte four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-958408-25-4. Price: \$20.00 from www.redmoonpress.com

In the afterword Hannah Mahoney provides a brief history of the Broadmoor Haiku Collective. Inspired by Jeannie Martin's haiku instruction, they originally met as the Alewife Haiku Group, then in 2018 they hosted a ginko at a Massachusetts Audubon preserve called the Broadmoor Nature Center. During the pandemic they decided to "transform our ginko into what we quickly came to call Zoomko"—using photographs, artwork, nature videos and similar media as prompts for writing haiku. All of the poets included in this anthology have been active members including Brad Bennett, Alan S. Bridges, Judson Evans, Kristen Lindquist, Hannah Mahoney, Jeannie Martin, paul m., Tom Sacramona, and Mary Stevens. Here are a few samples of favorite haiku: *first warm day / a turtle rests its chin / on the one in front* by Hannah Mahoney. *dawn fog ... / not*

tethered to anything, / a wood duck by paul m. crane dance — / *just a few downstrokes / of the brush* by Judson Evans. *solstice bash / in bed with the bonfire / still in my hair* by Kristen Lindquist. *storm clouds / new potatoes roll / off the shovel* by Brad Bennett. *new snow on old / all the little nothings / I want to tell her* by Alan S. Bridges. *caterpillar / eating / for two* by Mary Stevens. *in my dreams / our childhood house / upside down* by Jeanie Martin. And one more: *snow in the air / the piano player props open / his car hood* by Tom Sacramona. Get your own copy of this outstanding collection of haiku! —RB

They Never Asked: Senryū Poetry from the WWII Portland Assembly Center, eds. Shelley Baker-Gard, Michael Freiling, and Satsuki Takikawa (Corvallis, Ore.: Oregon State University Press, 2023). 185 pages; 6" × 9". Matte four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-0-87071-235-7. Price: \$29.95 from online booksellers.

The book at hand is the result of Duane Watari's discovery of his grandfather Maskaki Kinoshita's wartime journals. Like many other Japanese and Japanese-Americans, Kinoshita was interned during WWII, first at the North Portland WCCA Assembly Center and then at Minidoka concentration camp. His grandfather had been a senryu poet prior to internment, and he along with other poets continued to write senryu in the centers. The poems are an amazing glimpse into the concerns and treatment of the internees. *They Never Asked* is composed of a good historical record of the centers, as well as sixty-seven senryu by a variety of writers, not surprisingly, the majority by Kinoshita himself (pennname Jōnan), pulled from one notebook written by the group during a two-week period at North Portland WCCA. We have been conditioned to think of senryu as comic verse, whose comedy is often ironic, satirical, biting, etc. These views have been reinforced by papers such as Teruko Kumei's "Crossing the Ocean," which features the poem: *next morning, / all sobered up, dawn. / sake-brewed brawls*; that poem is included in the introduction to *They Never Asked*. However, many of the senryu in *They Never Asked* seem flat compared to the ones we have been accustomed

to. For example: *my mother says / "things are not so simple" / duty beckons*, or *my self-control departs / at the train station / I'm moved to tears*. There seems little humor or sly commentary in any of these, which leads to fundamental questions about the nature of senryu; of course, it is possible weaker poems were selected for their description of events rather than humorous or satirical impact. Yet, other poems are striking: *even autumn / comes on command here — / assembly center; we see you off / through flowing tears / to the beet fields*. These easily meet our expectations of senryu. Overall, an important volume that does much to widen our understanding of the internee experience. —Paul Miller

Skipping Stones: The Red Moon Anthology of English-Language Haiku 2022, eds. Jim Kacian and the Red Moon Editorial Staff (Winchester, Va.: Red Moon Press, 2023). 204 pages; 5½x" × 8¼". Matte four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-958408-16-2. Price: \$20.00 from www.redmoonpress.com

Another volume of the “best of” collected by the RMA editors: one hundred and eighty-three haiku and senryu, twenty-eight sequences and haibun, plus five essays. Of the essays: Akito Arima’s “Haiku’ to Contribute to World Peace,” David McMurray’s “Matsuo Basho’s Influence on Haiku’ and “When Love for War Poetry Fades,” Brad Bennett’s “Euphony in Haiku,” and David Burleigh’s “Haiku: Whose Counting”—the last two published in our pages. With so many outlets these days publishing quality essays we question the slight selection of essays in the volume and wonder if the space couldn’t be used for more poetry. There are several annual anthologies; the RMA best represents the temperature of the larger haiku community. A must for every haiku lover’s bookshelf. —PM

Pearls: God’s Inspired Word in Haiku, by Karen DiNoble (Eugene, Ore.: Resource Publications, 2023). 115 pages; 5" × 8". Matte four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-6667-6793-3. Price: \$12.93 from online booksellers.

An interesting book, written for the faithful. DiNoble sets in trios a biblical verse, her brief interpretation of it, and a haiku on its theme. The haiku vary in literary haiku-ness. Some are merely statements of faith, such as *conductor / of the music in my soul / Yahweh* (Psalms 108: 1,3), yet others fit nicely within the ELH tradition: *unexpected guests / on my front porch / cherry blossoms* (James 1:17), *diagnosis day / in my pocket / a packet of mustard seed* (Matthew 17:20), or *comfortably clothed for winter sparrows* (Matthew 6:26). As the last haiku shows, a reader probably wouldn't make the connection between a particular haiku and its biblical verse if DiNoble hadn't provided it, but in doing so she opens the poems up for further reflection. Haiku are often pushed into a Zen envelope, but why shouldn't a Christian writer use it to describe what, as Bashō said, is happening, right here, right now—to them? We are always interested in the ways haiku can be used; DiNoble has set herself an interesting challenge, and for the right audience, she has succeeded. —PM

Human: An Anthology of Bulgarian Haiku, ed, Dimitar Anakiev (Winchester, Va.: Red Moon Press, 2023). 92 pages; 4¼" × 6½". Matte four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-958408-15-5. Price: \$20.00 from www.redmoonpress.com

It may be true that “Western” haiku are “the product of a rational culture,” as editor Anakiev asserts in his uneven, sometimes problematic introduction. However, it is debatable that that is not also the case in Bulgarian haiku. The anthology contains a single poem each by seventy-five poets who draw on myth, folklore, animism, and other elements of the mystical. It is hard not to think Anakiev cherry-picked poems to meet his idea of Bulgarian haiku, especially when we compare some of the wilder variants to more normative haiku in several anthologies by Ludmila Balabanova. So while questions of how representative this anthology truly is regarding Bulgarian haiku, the poems themselves are full of imaginative statements and metaphors—more overt than most ELH poets are used to—but still a wild and enjoyable window into some Bulgarian haikuists. *A torn flower. / The soul of a butterfly / flies to the sky.* (Yaneva); *Continents*

/ are shipwrecks / in the tear of God. (Parasheva); *When / the stones wake up / how will we justify ourselves?* (Gechev). —PM

Grace: Kiyoko and Kiyoshi Tokutomi's Haiku Life, by Patricia J. Machmill-
er (Cupertino, Calif.: Frog on the Moon, 2023). 34 pages; 8½" × 8½".
Glossy four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 979-8-9880696-1-4.
Price: \$18.00 from YTHS, PO Box 412, Monterey CA 53475.

A collection of twelve haibun on the Yuki Teikei Haiku Society's found-
ing couple, the Tokutomis, as well as the author's interactions with them.
It is clear that Machmill-er, also co-editor of their letters' collection *Aut-
umn Leaves*, has deep emotional ties to the loving couple. The haibun
reveal moments in the couple's life, that often reveal sides to their char-
acters, and the associated haiku fit nicely, not explaining, but opening
the narratives wider—often thematically. A brief book, that nonetheless
gives a wide view of the couple, and makes this reader wish he had known
them better. The book also includes illustrations and calligraphy by Caro-
lyn Fitz, in black and white. —PM

Powroty / Returns, by Lidia Rozmus (Poland: Wydawnictwo Auste-
ria, 2023). 95 pages; 8¾" × 8¾". Matte black and white card covers;
perfectbound. ISBN 978-83-7866-594-6. Price: 40zł from [https://aus-
teria.pl/autor/lidia-rozmus/](https://austria.pl/autor/lidia-rozmus/)

The exhibition catalog from Rozmus' latest Polish exhibit. She works in
oils, sumi-e, and photographs, many with paired haiku. In one series the
surface of the washi paper contains flaps that open to reveal haiku. Of
interest is her hanging stone series, in which she incorporates stones from
the US and Europe into her paintings. Rozmus is an engaging artist and
there is a vibrant variety to her work. For those not able to fly to Poland
the catalog is the next best thing. Similar to her art books, the catalog is
a thing of beauty. —PM

Haiku 2023, eds. Lee Gurga & Scott Metz (Champaign, Ill.: Modern Haku Press, 2023). 126 pages; 5½" × 4¼". Glossy four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-0-9600855-6-9. Price: \$10.00 from www.modernhaiku.org

The latest from editors Gurga and Metz showcasing what they term "100 notable ku from 2022." In the afterward by Michele Root-Bernstein, in part quoting from editor Gurga, she states that there is "No claim to be the 'best' haiku of the year, but something much more interesting: a representative sample of 'haiku that are attempting to extend the traditional while remaining a part of that tradition.'" It contains poems such as: *first spring / a hummingbird / in my baby's chest* (Antebi); *yellow ribbons of pollen on the beach Gretel's last pebbles* (Balistreri); *the ghost in my phone / predicting the next / river | woods | earth | word* (Cremin); and we're only three letters in. There is a reason the 2022 volume sold out. Always recommended. —PM

Harvest Moon, by Hiroyuki Murakami (Japan: privately printed, 2023). 36 pages; 5½" × 8½". Glossy four-colored card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 979-8-397225-2-1. Price: \$6.43 from online booksellers.

Harvest Moon presents thirty-seven haiku in English and Japanese, many with reference notes. For example, the haiku *keichitsu —/ noh theater in a basement / in Ginza* is accompanied by the note "Keichitsu: One of 24 divisions of the lunar calendar. The time of year when reptiles and insects come out of hibernation. A season word / kigo used since the time of Takahama Kyoshi (1874–1959)." For an English reader not familiar with Japanese cultural references, these notes add a deeper understanding. The haiku form a seasonal progression, and Murakami's inclusion of notes, headers, and color photographs make his very Japanese collection come to life. A member of the Yuki Teikei Haiku Society as well as several Japanese associations, Murakami straddles the two cultures. An enjoyable collection that seems larger than it is. *one person's smile / makes others smile — / flowering dogwood; islands / where the sons of pirates dwell — / spring storm; a snowstorm / blows up against wolves / in a cage.* —PM

World Haiku 2023, ed. Ban'ya Natsuishi (Japan: World Haiku Association, 2023). 225 pages; 5¾" × 8¼". Glossy four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-4-9912533-4-8. Price: \$15.00 from www.worldhaiku.net

The latest annual from the World Haiku Association with "469 haiku by 166 poets in 31 languages from 42 countries." With a few exceptions, the haiku in the first half of the book are translated into English. Of the three essays, one is translated. As might be expected of an anthology, especially a members' anthology, the quality varies. However it is interesting to see a slice of international haiku. A few favorites: *at the end of a silent illness the breeze from a broken pencil* (Boyer); *A sigh / locked in / this icicle* (Tanaka); *pressed flowers / the meadow I will give you / this winter* (Strange). —PM

A Blush on the Apricots, poems by Johnnie Johnson Hafernik and artwork by Dorothy M. Messerschmitt (No place [San Francisco, Calif.]; privately printed, 2023). 43 pages; 8½" × 8½". Glossy four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-365-96944-7. Price: \$14.00 from www.lulu.com

A collaborative book of twenty-six haibun. The book has done a good job giving each haiga space to breathe, and the quality of the paper allows the artist's colors room. It is unknown who worked from what, whether poet from the artwork, or the artist from the poem, but the result is a comfortable space between the written and the visual, so while referents can be found between the two, neither explains the other. An enjoyable collaboration between two friends. —PM

Finding My Way Home, by Robert Epstein (Berkeley, Calif.: Privately printed, 2023). 103 pages; 6" × 9". Matte four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 979-8-395211-16-3. Price: \$14.00 from online booksellers.

The latest collection from one of the community's more prolific poets. Recently, Epstein's landlord passed away, and he was forced to move from his rented home of more than thirty years; he didn't take it well. But as might be expected of the author of several collections and anthologies on what might be widely renamed "sudden change," he turned to haiku to help him give voice to his stress. The result is ninety haiku on the moving experience. Some of the weaker, statement-like haiku should have been culled, but we understand their inclusion as part of a larger narrative. Overall, a very enjoyable collection. *the 60 day notice / takes me up to / Mom's death anniversary; bubble wrap— / I need some / protection too; my last day — / the car could have fit / in the garage again.* —PM

Crows at Dusk, by James Roderick Burns (Winchester, Va.: Red Moon Press, 2023). 112 pages; 4¼" × 6½". Glossy four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-958408-22-3. Price: \$20.00 from www.redmoonpress.com

There is a fine balance between public and private in the sharing of haiku. What is important to the poet must also be important to the reader, or at least the poet needs to show why the moment/image is important. Burns doesn't make it easy. In some haiku, such as *Long windows / and a pile of ash — / nothing to see*, the reader isn't given sufficient clues as to why this is important; is the ash the result of structure fire, why the emphasis on windows? Or take, *Horned shadows — / even the suggestion / of a flea*; Is this a deer, some mythological creature, a Viking? And so what that there are fleas? Unfortunately, too often this reader found themselves mystified by what the poet was trying to share. In other poems, Burns shares overmuch, and they come off as statements: *Mossy cobbles / flatten and shine under / the wash of tyres; With equal grace / light falls on both crow/ and chorister.* —PM

Wabi-Sabi, by Beth Howard (No place: privately printed, 2023). 71 pages; 5½" × 5½". Matte black and white card covers; perfectbound. No ISBN. Price: \$12.00 from the author at bethbrohoward@icloud.com

A small, attractive book that doesn't quite live up to its covers. Many of the poems are flat statements, substituting narrative for image, such as *with hope for future / autumn trees cast leaf ballots / never counting them* and *visit old friend / faded like ink on paper / lonely winter ghost*, in which message is more important than poetry. Many are also 5-7-5, which is fine, except when she is forced to leave out words as she does in the first example ("for the future"). Some work very nicely, such as *almost forgetting / tiny maple leaves open / my son is at war*, but these are in the minority. Howard has a good eye for detail, but needs to learn to trust her readers more. —PM

Soft Serve: Haiku Remains, by Gary Hotham (Montrose, Colo.: Pinyon Publishing, 2023). 61 pages; 4¾" × 6¼". Blue handmade card covers; section sewn. ISBN 978-1-936671-92-2. Price: \$25.00 from the publisher at www.pinyon-publishing.com

Hotham has been successfully writing haiku for decades, so we are always delighted to see a new collection—in particular, one as beautifully produced as this. Handmade and string tied, it is a piece of art. And of the poems inside? Hotham has always had a good eye for the right juxtaposition as well as the craftsmanship to make it read effortlessly, naturally. The poems in the current collection have an emphasis on family, but also the larger environs around them. There is a strong cohesiveness to the collection. Some favorites: *before the water boils the peas / her pinch of salt / becomes two; never / inside the rocks / all day rain; after the butterfly / the flower with its own / colors; kitchen morning / sounds of keeping knives / from spoons*. A limited edition. Recommended. —PM

The Case of the Lesbian Cowgirls: A Haiku Detective Novel, by Michael Ketchek (Rochester, N.Y.: Free Food Press, 2023). 139 pages; 5½" × 8½". Matte four-color card covers; perfectbound. No ISBN. Price: \$10.00 from www.mketchek.wixsite.com/mysite

For fans of Ketchek's previous mystery novel, *Basho's Cocaine* (2020), detective and haiku poet Francis Swift returns to solve another mystery involving haiku. We won't reveal the plot, suffice it to say that Ketchek's detective investigates threatening haiku sent to country-western band Lesbain Cowgirls. People are stabbed, poisoned, punched, and our hero (ish) is rarely at a loss for a snarky quip. Another fun romp. —PM

To Whom it May Concern, by Joe McKeon (Winchester, Va.: Red Moon Press, 2023). 148 pages; 6"×9". Matte four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN978-1-9580408-24-7. Price: \$20.00 from www.redmoonpress.com

A call to arms for haiku that speak to the injustice and suffering in the world. In her Introduction, Julie Schwerin speaks to the balance such poems must take. The poems that persuade the best are the ones which allow the reader to engage with them without overriding commentary. The poems in *To Whom it May Concern* are haiku, senryu, and tanka, and are paired with opposite-page paragraphs detailing various forms of suffering, from natural extinctions to military conflicts, and much in-between. McKeon has set himself a tall challenge, and for the most part he succeeds. Where he doesn't is when he writes in generalities rather than concrete specifics, such as the too-big: *crop blight / the descendants of foragers / return to their roots*. But in the main the poems are effective. A hard book to read at times, and some of his prose pieces are debatable, but a necessary conversation. Some favorites: *extinct / a page torn-out / of the coloring book; food bank / a pat of butter / wrapped in gold; desert heat / soldiers on the road / where Jesus walked*. —PM

To Live Here, eds. Giorgia Di Pancrazio and Katherine E Winnick (No place: The Wee Sparrow Poetry Press, 2023). 186 pages; 6"×6". Matte four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-8-8409528-16-5. Price: \$14.00 from online booksellers.

An anthology of poems on the theme of home. As might be expected, the theme means many things to many people, and it is interesting to see how the 150 poets in the anthology tackled it. Common themes were homelessness, climate change, as well as pastoral musings. A few favorites: *beach bottles / we don't get / the message* (Andersson); *desert cliffs / the shadow of a raven / carries dad home* (Feingold); *homecoming — / Siberian cranes' cry / above the war zone* (Iyer); *deep winter / the widow's porch light / always on* (Rickert). All proceeds from sales will go to Salford Loaves & Fishes, a UK charity that supports the homeless. —PM

Tandem: Art & Poetry in Motion, ed. Dave Russo (No place [Pittsboro, N.C.]: Pittsboro Gallery of Arts, 2023). 20 pages; 5"×7". Matte four-color card covers; saddle-stapled. No ISBN. Price: \$12.00 from www.pittsboroarts.org/

Catalog from the July 2023 gallery show, in which members of the North Carolina Haiku Society wrote haiku on twenty works of art. The art itself was comprised of photographs, sculpture, jewelry, and a variety of paintings. There is an interesting balance in many of the works, in which the poem is only tied to the art tangentially, opening the artwork beyond itself. It is good to see haiku share the stage with the larger art world. —PM

Barking at the Coming Rain, by Réka Nyitrai and Alan Peat (United Kingdom: Alba Publishing, 2023). 74 pages; 6"×8". Glossy four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-912773-57-2. Price: \$16.00 from www.albapublishing.com

A collaborative collection of ekphrastic haibun based on the works of female surrealist artists. The artwork upon which the haibun are based are listed in the back of the book, and for obvious reasons aren't included. In all cases, Nyitrai wrote the haibun's prose, and Peat the haiku and title; both poets further edited the whole. This makes for an interesting, but

also at times a frustrating read. If the reader is willing to search for the art in advance, the haibun can be an enjoyable journey, to see where and how the poets leap from the original. Nyitrai's prose is delightful, playful, and well-written. And Peat's haiku nicely cap the prose. It is clear that the two poets enjoyed the process; the reader will too. —PM

swallow s tail s, by Marshall Hryciuk (Canada: Imago Press, 2023). 32 pages; 5½" × 4". Matte four-color card covers; saddle-stapled. ISBN 978-0-920489-82-6. Price: \$18.00 from the author at imagorediron@gmail.com

A collection of haiku whose lineation varies from poem to poem, four lines to a dozen, sometimes words broken into individual letters, sometimes both or either missing. These are poems whose spacing slows the reader down to a crawl. Not all hit; in some cases too much is expected of the concrete spacing, which if removed reveals a flatness. These are hard poems to share in a review, but an example would be: *trumpet* (centered) / *flowers* (15 spaces) *cardinal* / *swaying* (centered) / *on* (20 spaces) *a* / *trapeze* (centered). However, others revel in the movement his lineation creates. *grass* (10 spaces) *i stop* / *it stops* / *t w i t c h i n g* / *its* / *ears* / *d e e r*. —PM

The Gossamer, by Aidan Castle (No place: Privately printed, 2023). 84 pages; 5" × 8". Matte black and white card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 979-8-393361-61-7. Price: \$8.99 from online booksellers.

A fan of disjunction, Castle combines images that a reader might not normally associate with each other, but in the final poem work organically—often in a surreal or magical way. He is especially a fan of enjambling one-line images. Because he is often working in his own imaginary space, rather than a shared communal one (whose existence is arguable), some poems feel like you had to be Castle to make a meaningful connection; and a few connections feel forced, as in: *scent of a mushroom city light*.

But his risk-taking is laudable. His subjects range from natural images to gender identity, talk radio, and other modern observances. Despite his poetic swerves, Castle presents a solid foundation. A few favorites: *the sand in my ear galloping horses; day moon / a salmon scale clings / to the angler's knife; i smile on the inside anemones*. A challenging book, but well-worth the effort. Recommended. —PM

A Little Knowing, by Salil Chaturvedi (India: privately printed, 2023). 56 pages; 5½" × 8½". Glossy four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 979-8-851819-21-6. Price: \$8.00 from online booksellers.

A collection of thirty haibun interspersed with a few standalone haiku. Chaturvedi does a good job balancing the needs of the prose and haiku, so that one expands the other without overt explanations. The haibun explore what it means to be in and of a place, to sit quietly and really see it, and to ponder what it could possibly mean. Yet the pieces never feel claustrophobic or limiting. A fine outing. —PM

Journey Ongoing, by Michael Dudley (Canada: privately printed, 2023). 127 pages; 5¼" × 8". Glossy four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 979-8-398850-75-8. Price: \$19.39 from online booksellers.

From 2018 to 2020's emergence of Covid, Dudley traveled freely and often without plan through his native Canada and Europe. From these travels came nearly two hundred haiku, which he presents in *Journey Ongoing*. The poems are joyful in the main, as Dudley delights in his surroundings. For example: *trailside rest — / a walking stick starts walking up / my walking stick; overcast night / the downtown shelter window / duct-taped into a star; another variant wave — / an eroded timeline / of broken shells*. However, while most of the poems are enjoyable, and nicely describe moments of inspiration—with a practiced hand—some fall flat and should have been culled. Overall, an enjoyable read. —PM

Contemporary Haibun 18, editor in chief Rich Youmans (Winchester, Va.: Red Moon Press, 2023). 154 pages; 5¼" × 8¼". Matte four-color card covers; perfectbound. ISBN 978-1-958408-17-9. Price: \$20.00 from www.redmoonpress.com

Another annual from Red Moon Press, this one taking stock of the “best” haibun, tanka prose, and haiga. The editor rightly describes the current state of contemporary haibun as a shift toward more experimentation. One haibun by P.H. Fischer is capped by a haiku written in binary code! The included pieces are not to be rushed, but savored, thought upon. The haiga are equally varied: photo-haiga, drawings, collage, etc. Another pleasing, thought-provoking volume. —PM